

Quality Teaching, Program Articulation and Literacy

Enhance the Quality of Teaching in Missouri's Middle and High Schools

In order for teachers at the middle and high school levels to provide quality instruction that is relative to the workforce development needs of Missouri, and the career goals of students, they should have a major in the core area in which they teach. These teachers should also be able to help students link the learning experience in middle and high school to their career goals and understand how the areas of communication, mathematics, science, social science and fine arts increase their earning potential.

Teachers should participate in an apprenticeship program for new teachers which would combine mentoring by a master teacher in content and presentation skills. A good working model of this approach is currently utilized by the Division of Adult and Vocational Education in cooperation with Central Missouri State University. New career and technical education teachers are given the opportunity to attend a New Teacher Institute during the summer and then participate in call-back sessions to work with other new teachers to continue to improve their teaching methods. Master teachers from community colleges and area career centers provide instruction and feedback for this institute. This approach has proven to be especially effective for teachers with a thorough knowledge and experience with subject matter, but little or no training regarding learning theory and teaching methods.

Teachers at all levels should also be given the opportunity to participate in externships during the summer months to help them understand the needs of employers in Missouri. Some good examples of such programs have been implemented by the Joint Apprenticeship Training Center of the St. Louis Labor Council and several Regional Technical Education Councils in Missouri. Teachers from the career centers and community colleges have been participating in these externship opportunities. The same opportunities should be provided to elementary, middle and secondary level teachers. Missouri must stress the importance of real-life experience in the classroom along with the need to increase MAP results, professional development funds should be made available to school districts which are able to do both while providing meaningful learning experiences for teachers.

Expand on Current Practices to Improve Articulation Among all Missouri Education Providers

Students and Missouri employers both suffer from the current lack of a systematic process of articulating programs between Missouri institutions. Community colleges and universities currently spend many hours working out program to program articulation agreements which in effect limit the opportunities for students to progress toward the baccalaureate degree. The model developed in Kentucky which created a system for a seamless transfer of both the associate of arts and associate of applied science degrees has been recognized as particularly effective. Support by the Governor of Kentucky made this system a workable model that should be reviewed by Missouri. One consideration for performance funding for Missouri Higher Education should be how well all programs are articulated between other public two and four

year colleges and universities.

Articulation has been addressed by the Regional Technical Education Councils (R.T.E.C.s) in Missouri during the last six years with several of the community colleges now operating outreach programs through the area career centers (vocational schools). Community colleges have also utilized this opportunity to partner with employers and unions to expand the availability of college credit for work experience and training.

Mineral Area College, Jefferson College, and St. Charles Community College have all partnered with the Joint Apprenticeship Training Center in St. Louis to offer college credit for almost 20 programs in which training is not delivered by the colleges. Students can then attend the community college of their choice and complete the general education requirements for an associate of applied science degree in a specific skilled trade area.

The technology department at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau is currently working with Mineral Area College to articulate this credit to a baccalaureate degree. Other four-year colleges and universities in Missouri should be encouraged to provide the same opportunity for students.

The R.T.E.C. initiative has made measurable progress in providing postsecondary education opportunities to areas of the State which were previously underserved. However, with the current lack of new funding for R.T.E.C.s and other targeted programs, Missouri may stall out on its effort to continue to provide access to higher education for all citizens. Funding for the R.T.E.C.s has increased the opportunities for Missouri Citizens to stay in Missouri and gain skills which will make those individuals employable and keep Missouri employers competitive.

Market Our Services and Publicize Our Successes

As the groups began to discuss which employment and training issues should be addressed, it became evident that we do not always effectively market the services which are available. A lengthy discussion of core competencies for specific careers made it evident that some participants were not aware of the hard work which has been done by the Division of Adult and Vocational Education over the last decade to identify those necessary skills. Adequate resources should be directed at making employers and Missouri Citizens aware that we have the necessary programs to train Missouri workers in the necessary skills to be effective productive employees.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Adult and Vocational Education, has posted the competency profiles for programs on its website at www.dese.state.mo.us/divvoked. Additionally, MAP scores and data may be accessed at www.dise.state.mo.us.

Increase Literacy in Missouri by Engaging People to Participate in Literacy Programs

The workgroups recognized that literacy must be increased in Missouri by creating better access to literacy programs for Missouri citizens. Literacy programs in Missouri should be marketed to employers, economic development professionals, and citizens so that all may have the opportunity to gain basic employability skills. We very often learn through discussions with employers that literacy and basic skills are more of an issue to employers than are specific job skills.

Programs which have been available should be expanded through the area career centers, (vocational schools) Missouri Career Center One-Stops, community colleges and public four-year institutions and employer sites. Higher education institutions should be required to develop programs to serve citizens and employers in the regions they serve, and a recognized credentialing system for workforce readiness should be developed. Efforts to tie an assessment system such as Work Keys to basic skills and employability skills need to be increased, and education providers at all levels should understand the need to improve both a set of core workforce competencies and job specific competencies.

Additional Issues

We have to recognize the importance of and sustain the effort to link training and education to employer recruitment and retention. In Missouri, regional differences in the needs of citizens and employers must also be recognized, while we also consider adding new sectors of employers to the list of those which are critical to Missouri's future.

Employers in Missouri also need assistance with implementing the latest technology within their industries. We too often expect that employers can hire our trained workers in jobs which may not yet exist in some regions in Missouri. This may require a thorough assessment of what assistance employers need in order to remain competitive and thrive in Missouri. The ongoing dialogue between employers and the providers of training and education services must be expanded, and employers should take a distinct role in helping determine what methods and programs are utilized to train the workers of the future.

Missouri has invested heavily in training workers for Missouri employers over the last several years and should continue to do so. However, employers must recognize the importance of their role as a partner with the State and all of the providers of training and education in the State. We must stop rehashing the issues we have faced for the last decade and provide new and innovative approaches to training the workforce who will be Missouri's future.